

Jonker Young
SR 520, I-5 to Medina: Bridge Replacement and HOV Project April 15, 2010
Environmental Manager
SR 520 Project Office, 600 Stewart Street, Suite 520
Seattle, WA 98101

Dear Sir/Madam,

I-318-001 Regarding the adequacy of the SDEIS, one of the over-riding omissions/errors appears to be in not just characterising the need(s) for the project, but in the engineering approach to a solution.

There has been much fanfare associated with proposing a new bridge which would have two general purpose lanes and one high-occupancy vehicle lane in each direction. The rationale for this is implicitly to increase traffic capacity. However there has been no adequate analysis completed which shows that a significant increase can occur with the current design.

I-318-002 The plans for the three Alternatives i.e. A, K and L, as described in the document, all terminate at the west end with a merging of the HOV into the SOV lanes fully three-quarters of the time. The only exception to this poorly engineered "solution" seems to be for the unique case of traffic coming from the east side of Lake Washington into downtown Seattle, and then only in the mornings, because the proposed new HOV lanes then are able to be connected to the existing HOV lanes on I-5. At other times, and for traffic attempting to head north on I-5 from westbound SR-520, a merge on the Portage Way viaduct is necessary. Such a merge will, in fact, lower the roadway capacity below that which would be possible with just a straight through four general purpose lanes.

I-318-003 Inasmuch as the primary congestion time period on SR-520 currently is in the early evening, and westbound, the addition of HOV lanes plus the proposed merge as the traffic approaches I-5, will undoubtedly mean that the whole purpose of the addition of two more lanes will be negated, since the traffic capacity will be reduced below that which could be accomplished with just four continuous lanes. This totally undermines any rational argument for adding the two more lanes.

Sincerely,

Maurice B. Cooper, P.E.
1225 Parkside Drive East,
Seattle, WA. 98112
206-322-0234

I-318-001

As described in Chapter 1 of the SDEIS, "The purpose of the project is to improve mobility for people and goods across Lake Washington within the SR 520 corridor from Seattle to Redmond in a manner that is safe, reliable, and cost effective, while avoiding, minimizing, and/or mitigating impacts on affected neighborhoods and the environment." To this end the project, with the addition of a continuous HOV lane in each direct and improvements to freeway interchanges achieves this by improving travel times for transit, HOV, and general-purpose trips, and increases person throughput in the corridor. Please refer to Chapter 5 of the Final EIS and Chapter 5 of the Transportation Discipline Report (Attachment 7 to the Final EIS) for more information about how this is achieved with the Preferred Alternative.

I-318-002

Analysis completed in the Transportation Discipline Report reflects the peak period traffic operations and during the evening peak period. Exhibits 5-17 and 5-18 of the SDEIS illustrate the changes in traffic operations between the various options. There is some additional congestion at the Portage Bay Bridge area during the evening peak that is the result of improvements in the westbound corridor operations at Evergreen Point. The Alternatives are all shown to provide some travel time benefit for both general purpose and HOV traffic compared to a No Build alternative for the year 2030. This can be seen in Exhibit 5-20 of the SDEIS Transportation Discipline Report.

I-318-003

Comment noted.